

Examination Standards

Introduction

The United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS) Examination Standards is based on the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, published by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association and National Council on Measurement in Education. For additional explanation of standards, the above referenced publication is very helpful.

In general, UCNS member organizations should develop and administer their examinations in accord with national standards. In cases where such standards are not possible to obtain, a clear explanation for such deviation should be made available.

In situations where the standards indicate that information must be made available to candidates, it is acceptable to consider a variety of methods. This might include providing such information with material sent directly to the candidate, or by publishing such data on public venues such as websites and making reference to such availability in material provided to the candidate.

A. Validity

1. Candidates should receive a clear statement of how test scores are intended to be interpreted and used.
2. A rationale should be available to candidates for each recommended interpretation and use of test scores.
3. When the validation rests in part on the appropriateness of test content, the procedures followed in specifying and generating test content should be described in reference to the construct the test is intended to measure or the domain it is intended to represent. Such information should be readily available to candidates.
4. When interpretation of performance on specific items, or small subsets of items, is suggested, the rationale and relevant evidence in support of such interpretation should be made available.

B. Reliability and Errors of Measurement

1. For each total score, sub-score or combination of scores that is to be interpreted, estimates of relevant reliabilities and standard errors of measurement or test information functions should be calculated and made available.
2. The standard error of measurement, both overall and conditional (if relevant), should be reported both in raw score or original scale units and in units of each derived score recommended for use in test interpretation.
3. Each method of quantifying the precision or consistency of scores should be described clearly and expressed in terms of statistics appropriate to the method.

C. Test Development and Revision

1. The purpose(s) of the test, definition of the domain, and the test specifications should be stated clearly and made available to the candidate.
2. The test specifications should be documented along with their rationale and the process by which they were developed. The test specifications should define the content of the test, the proposed number of items, the item formats, the desired psychometric properties of the items, and the item and section arrangement. They should also specify the amount of time for testing, directions to the test takers, procedures to be used for test administration and scoring, and other relevant information. This information should be made available to candidates.
3. The procedures used to interpret test scores, and, when appropriate, the normative or standardization samples or the criterion used should be documented and made available to candidates.
4. The type of items, the response formats, scoring procedures, and test administration procedures should be selected based on the purposes of the test, the domain to be measured and the intended test takers.
5. The procedures used to develop, review and try out items, and to select items from the item pool should be documented. If the items were classified into different categories or subtests according to the test specifications, the procedures used for the classification and the appropriateness and accuracy of the classification should be documented and made available to candidates.
6. When a test score is derived from the differential weighting of items, the rationale and process to develop, review, and assign item weights should be documented and made available to candidates.
7. The directions for test administration should be presented with sufficient clarity and emphasis so that it is possible for others to replicate the administration conditions under which the data on reliability and validity were obtained.

8. The instructions presented to test takers should contain sufficient detail so that test takers can respond to a task in the manner that the test developer intended. When appropriate, sample material, practice or sample questions, criteria for scoring, and a representative item should be provided to the test takers prior to the administration of the test or included in the testing material as part of the standard administration instructions.
9. A test should be amended or revised when new research data, significant changes in the domain represented, or newly recommended conditions of test use may lower the validity.
10. If a test or part of a test is intended for research use only and is not intended for scoring, statements to this effect should be displayed on all relevant test administration and interpretation materials that are provided to the test user.

D. Scales, Norms, and Score Comparability

1. Test documents should provide test users with clear explanations of the meaning and intended interpretation of derived score scales, as well as their limitations.
2. When raw score or derived score scales are designed for criterion-referenced interpretation, including the classification of examinees into separate categories, the rationale for recommended score interpretations should be clearly explained.
3. If test specifications are changed from one version of a test to a subsequent version, such changes should be identified and made available to candidates.
4. When proposed score interpretations involve one or more cut scores, the rationale and procedures used for establishing cut scores should be clearly documented.
5. When cut scores defining pass-fail or proficiency categories are based on direct judgments about the adequacy of item or test performances or performance levels, the judgmental process should be designed so that judges can bring their knowledge and experience to bear in a reasonable way.

E. Test Administration, Scoring, and Reporting

1. Test administrators should follow carefully the standardized procedures for administration and scoring specified by the test developer unless the situation or a test taker's disability dictates that an exception should be made.
2. Modifications or disruptions of standardized test administration procedures or scoring should be documented.
3. When procedures have been established for requesting and receiving accommodations, test takers should be informed of these procedures in advance of testing.

4. Instructions to test takers should clearly indicate how to make responses. Instructions should also be given in the use of any equipment likely to be unfamiliar to test takers.
5. Reasonable efforts should be made to assure the integrity of test scores by eliminating opportunities for test takers to attain scores by fraudulent means.
6. When test information is released to test takers or other responsible parties, those responsible for the testing program should provide appropriate interpretations. The interpretations should describe in simple language what the test covers, what scores mean and the precision of the scores.
7. Transmission of individually identified test scores to authorized individuals or institutions should be done in a manner that protects the confidential nature of the scores.
8. When a material error is found in test scores or other important information, a corrected score report should be distributed as soon as practicable to all known recipients who might otherwise use the erroneous scores as a basis for decision making. The corrected report should be labeled as such.
9. When test data about a person are retained, both the test protocol and any written report should also be preserved in some form.
10. Organizations that maintain test scores on individuals in data files or in an individual's records should develop a clear set of policies on the duration of retention of an individual's records and on the availability, and use over time, of such data.

F. Supporting Documentation

1. The population for whom the test is intended and the test specifications should be documented.
2. When relevant for test interpretation, test documents ordinarily should include item level information, cut scores and information about raw scores and derived scores, the standard errors of measurement and a description of the procedures used to equate multiple forms.
3. Every test form and supporting document should carry a copyright date or publication date.

G. Fairness and Testing and Test Use

The testing or assessment process should be carried out so that test takers receive comparable and equitable treatment during all phases of the testing process.

H. The Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers

1. Any information about test content and purposes that is available to any test taker prior to testing should be available to all test takers. Important information should be available free of charge and in accessible formats.
2. Where appropriate, test takers should be provided, in advance, as much information about the test, the testing process, the intended test use, test scoring criteria, testing policy, and confidentiality protection as is consistent with obtaining valid responses.
3. When the test taker is offered a choice of test format, information about the characteristics of each format should be provided.
4. Test results identified by the names of individual test takers, or by other personally identifying information, should be released only to persons with a legitimate, professional interest in the test taker or who are covered by the informed consent of the test taker or a legal representative, unless otherwise required by law.
5. Test data maintained in data files should be adequately protected from improper disclosure. Use of facsimile transmission, computer networks, data banks, and other electronic data processing or transmittal systems should be restricted to situation in which confidentiality can be reasonably assured.
6. Test takers should be made aware that having someone else take the test for them, disclosing confidential test material, or any other form of cheating is inappropriate and that such behavior may result in sanctions.
7. When score reporting includes assigning individuals to categories, the categories should be chosen carefully and described precisely. The least stigmatizing labels, consistent with accurate representation, should always be assigned.
8. When test scores are used to make decisions about a test taker or to make recommendations to a test taker or a third party, the test taker or the legal representative is entitled to obtain a copy of any report of test scores or test interpretation, unless that right has been waived or is prohibited by law or court order.
9. In educational testing programs and in licensing and certification applications, when an individual score report is expected to be delayed beyond a brief investigative period, because of possible irregularities such as suspected misconduct, the test taker should be notified, the reason given, and reasonable efforts made to expedite review and to protect the interests of the test taker. The test taker should be notified of the disposition, when the investigation is closed.
10. In educational testing programs and in licensing and certification applications, when it is deemed necessary to cancel or withhold a test taker's score because of possible testing irregularities, including suspected misconduct, the type of evidence and procedures to be used to investigate the irregularity should be explained to all test takers whose scores are directly

affected by the decision. Test takers should be given a timely opportunity to provide evidence that the score should not be canceled or withheld. Evidence considered in deciding upon the final action should be made available to the test taker on request.

11. In educational testing programs and in licensing and certification applications, when testing irregularities are suspected, reasonable available information bearing directly on the assessment should be considered, consistent with the need to protect the privacy of test takers.
12. In educational testing programs and in licensing and certification applications, test takers are entitled to fair consideration and reasonable process, as appropriate to the particular circumstances, in resolving disputes about testing. Test takers are entitled to be informed of any available means of recourse.

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